

Interview with Lisa English

Assistant Resident Unit Supervisor
Bellamy Creek Correctional Facility

By Rosanne Leland, MDOC Work-Life Coordinator

**When did you quit smoking?**

English: "October 20, 2008"

For how long did you smoke?

English: "I smoked on and off for fourteen years."

Why did you quit?

English: "Well I would have to say the number one reason is that my daughter was diagnosed with leukemia in March of 2007. The other two reasons were the announcement of the Department's Tobacco Cessation Initiative in February of 2009, and smoking was getting too expensive! I also was beginning to feel like I "stuck-out like a sore thumb" as more often, it was not socially acceptable to smoke."

How do you feel since you quit?

English: "I can breathe better, my skin feels and looks better, and I am certain that my internal organs are improving as well. Added benefits are my relationship with my husband has improved; he is much more supportive, we don't argue as much, and we are saving money!"

In what situations did you find it most difficult to stop smoking?

English: "In the car. It was like I had to do something with my hands while driving. Also, at work it was difficult in high stress situations such as when I had a confrontation with staff, or when I had to de-escalate prisoners, and prisoner fights."

Who/what helped you stop smoking?

English: "My family, friends and the IBC Administration. The IBC Administration was instrumental, very supportive. I received very encouraging and supportive emails from Warden McKee, Deputy Schooley, Deputy Stoddard, and ADW Johnson.

"The [Michigan Tobacco Quitline](#) program also helped me quit. They provided me with a personal coach that helped me set a 'quit date.' My coach also gave me five free confidential counseling phone sessions that were very supportive and helped me set goals so I would succeed. Two of the counseling sessions were before my 'quit date' and three were after my 'quit date.' They sent me lozenges

which were paid for by my insurance company. I was also sent a ton of information on coping mechanisms, including how to get support from others."

What has your life been like since you stopped smoking?

English: "I am a lot freer. I can go places and do things and not worry about where I can go to smoke a cigarette."

How do you cope at home, at work, and in social situations since you stopped smoking?

"When I have the desire to smoke I find other things to do (not eating of course) like staying active, being involved in activities with my daughter, keeping my mind strong, relying more on myself, and breathing deeply. It is hard to quit but it is doable!"

What message would you like to give your co-workers who are trying to stop?

"We are an amazing department, having jumped many hurdles professionally and personally. As a Department we are faced with so many daily challenges that we sometimes take our own health for granted, offering ourselves justifications. With the negativity we face daily, we owe it to ourselves to be healthy and happy! I urge and challenge all of the amazing MDOC employees to stop the negative effects they can control in their lives, be it tobacco, stress—whatever. You, your family and your work life will only get better. I promise."